

Loss of Data – Government Travel Cards
Frequently Asked Questions
March 8, 2005

QUESTION: Do we really know what happened?

ANSWER: The Department of Defense is aware of a situation concerning the loss government travel card account information.

BofA is taking precautionary measures by monitoring all accounts that may be affected and coordinating with credit bureaus to detect potential fraudulent activity. As of today, no unusual activity or signs of fraud have been noted in any of these accounts.

The Secret Service is conducting an investigation.

QUESTION: Who is conducting the investigation?

ANSWER: The Secret Service has the lead, however, DCIS is working closely with them

QUESTION: How did this occur?

ANSWER: There is an ongoing investigation by the Secret Service, which may be jeopardized if we go into the specifics. Our primary concern is to protect the cardholders.

QUESTION: Why is the Secret Service investigating?

ANSWER: Fraud and related activity of this nature, fall under the Secret Service jurisdiction.

QUESTION: What kind of cards are these?

ANSWER: DoD travel cards are affected. Again this only affects some of these cards. BofA is taking precautionary measures by monitoring all accounts that may be affected and

coordinating with credit bureaus to detect any potential fraudulent activity. As of today, no unusual activity or signs of fraud have been noted. So far, none has been noted.

QUESTION: What is a travel card?

ANSWER: A credit card given to a government employee to use for official travel.

QUESTION: What kind of information are you talking about?

ANSWER: According to GSA, the lost data includes Privacy Act information such as Social Security numbers, account numbers and addresses.

QUESTION: How many DoD cardholders are affected?

ANSWER: Approximately 900,000 DoD accounts, both open and closed, The BofA is notifying affected individuals.

QUESTION: What are we doing?

ANSWER: BofA is taking precautionary measures by monitoring all accounts that may be affected and coordinating with credit bureaus to detect potential fraudulent activity. As of today, no unusual activity or signs of fraud have been noted. BofA is in the process of notifying (by mail) all affected cardholders. Their customer service representatives are prepared to answer questions from concerned card holders.

QUESTION: What should the DoD cardholders do?

ANSWER: Cardholders that are affected will be notified individually (by mail) by BofA, and will be further advised. BofA is taking precautionary measures by monitoring all accounts that may be affected. As of today, no unusual activity or signs of fraud have been noted. It is always prudent for cardholders to monitor their accounts for questionable charges and report suspected identity theft to the Federal Trade Commission at www.consumer.gov/idtheft.

QUESTION: What should the DoD cardholders do with his/her card?

ANSWER: Individual cardholders can contact the BoA regarding their government travel card account. Cardholders will also be given the option to cancel their card, however, the cardholders will not incur any personal liability for any fraudulent charges. Individuals who may be affected will be notified individually by mail, and will be further advised of their options.

QUESTION: Where can the cardholders go for further information?

ANSWER: Call BofA at 800-472-1424.

QUESTION: What is the appropriate action if you or one of your people are notified or suspect that they have been affected?

ANSWER: Call BofA at 800-472-1424.

BofA will be making available a free credit report to affected cardholders upon request.

It is always prudent for individuals to regularly monitor bank accounts and credit card accounts, dispute any questionable charges, and report suspected identity theft to the Federal Trade Commission at www.consumer.gov/idtheft.

QUESTION: Should I have my accounts flagged with a fraud alert?

ANSWER: That is certainly an option, but be aware that a fraud alert will automatically be applied to credit checks against your personal accounts for 90 days, and greatly slow up the approval process for any requested loans during that period. Let me reiterate, as of today, no unusual activity or signs of fraud have been noted against any of the affected accounts.

QUESTION: Is there any fee for a fraud alert?

ANSWER: There are no fees for fraud alerts.

QUESTION: Why doesn't Bank of America just notify the credit bureaus to place all of the accounts in a fraud alert status, rather than require individuals to do this?

ANSWER: Legally, Bank of America cannot act for an individual with respect to requesting credit reports or placing fraud alerts, nor can the Department. Furthermore, there are advantages and disadvantages to placing a fraud alert. As such, this has to be an individual decision.

QUESTION: Why did it take so long to disclose this?

ANSWER: Because of the ongoing Secret Service investigation, information was held closely so as not to compromise the investigation. The BofA has been monitoring accounts and coordinating with credit bureaus to detect potential fraudulent activity.

QUESTION: Will DoD continue the use of BofA for its credit cards?

ANSWER: At this time we have no plan to do otherwise.

QUESTION: Will DoD make changes to its travel card program in the future? Aren't these cards mandatory for DoD employees who travel more than twice a year?

ANSWER: We are assessing the program requirements with regard to security.

Yes.

QUESTION: How many travel card accounts are contracted by DoD with BofA?

ANSWER: Approximately 1 million annually.

QUESTION: I received a letter from Bank of America telling me my card information was lost, what should I do now?

ANSWER: If you have concerns, call the 800 number provided on the letter and find out what type of information for your account

was included on the missing tape. What you will want to do after that will depend on whether privacy data (SSN, Address, Date of Birth) were included.

QUESTION:

I called the Bank when I first got the letter and the person couldn't tell me what information was lost. What can I do?

ANSWER:

Call back again. Bank of America had to rapidly increase its call center staff and train them to handle this situation. Not every one was equally adept at answering questions. If you do not believe you received sufficient help, call back. If you are still unsatisfied have your APC notify your Major Command Agency Program Coordinator and your Component Program Manager.

QUESTION:

I called the bank and they told me only my name and government travel card number were included on the tape. What can I do now?

ANSWER:

You should understand that there is no liability to you should your government travel card be subject to fraud. If you see any fraudulent charges in the future, contact the Bank and dispute them. Even if you are TDY/TAD or deployed and could not dispute the charge within the 60 days normally allotted, you will not be liable for any charges that are determined to be fraudulent. You can ask the Bank to replace your card if you would prefer to do so.

QUESTION:

I called the Bank and was told that my name, SSN, and addresses were on the missing tape. What can I do?

ANSWER:

You may call the 800 number provided on your letter and ask for a free credit report. This will be provided at no cost to you. Second, consider whether you want to put a 90 day fraud alert on your account. This may or may not be something you want depending on your circumstances. You can discuss the implications with the credit bureau. Third, make sure to review all of your statements, not just your government travel card statements, for any suspicious activity and notify the appropriate financial institution, whether it is Bank of America or your own bank or credit

union immediately. Lastly, become familiar with the laws regarding free credit checks in your area and state. The Fair and Accurate Consumer Transactions Act (FACT Act) provides for an annual credit report free from each of the three credit bureaus. That means you could space those requests and receive one every four months. Implementation of the FACT Act is being phased in. A roll out schedule is available at annualcreditreport.com.

QUESTION:

Why can't I just get my credit report myself and send the bill to the Bank?

ANSWER:

The Bank of America has made special arrangements with a credit bureau to provide a free credit report which is in addition to what you can obtain on your own through a credit bureau. You may elect not to utilize the Bank's offer but they are not obligated to cover your costs if you choose a different approach. There are a number of circumstances under which you may be eligible to receive a free credit report on your own. For example, if you put a fraud alert on your account, or if you are in a state where the FACT ACT implementation has already occurred, you may be able to receive a free report. You should check with the credit bureau on the exact services they can offer you at no cost.

The National Credit Bureaus can be reached at:

Equifax 800-525-6285

Experian 888-397-3742

TransUnion 800-680-7289

QUESTION:

Will the Department no longer require DoD mandatory use of the Government Travel Card (GTC) and make it optional?

ANSWER:

Mandatory use of the government travel card is not just a matter of DoD policy. It's required by federal law. It is still the case that the GTC provides significant cost savings to the Department and more lenient payment terms to the individual than personal cards would provide. The Department will continue to review alternative card products and requirements for protecting privacy data.

QUESTION: I believe I may be the victim of identity theft. What can I do now?

ANSWER: If you believe you have already been the victim of identity theft, you should report that immediately to your local police department, your financial institution, and the Federal Trade Commission (www.consumer.gov/idtheft). You may also contact each of the national credit bureaus and get a copy of your credit report to review.

QUESTION: How do I make sure my deployed soldiers, sailors, or airmen get the information necessary for them to make an informed decision?

ANSWER: Each Service and DoD Agency Component Program Managers was provided on February 25, 2005 a list of names, by Command, of those whose information was included on the missing tape. The purpose of obtaining and disseminating the list was to identify those who were deployed and to make them a priority for getting notification to them. Certain steps, such as requesting a credit report or a fraud alert must be taken by the individual. Neither the Department nor the bank can make such requests without the individual's consent. Therefore, we need to ensure that the lists provided are passed to all appropriate levels to ensure all affected individuals are made aware of their options.

QUESTION: Why doesn't Bank of America just replace all the cards that were affected?

ANSWER: Because there is no individual liability for fraud on the government charge card, there is no need to replace all cards. Individuals may request replacements if they feel inclined to do so.

QUESTION: Where can I get more information on Identity Theft?

ANSWER: From the Federal Trade Commission website www.consumer.gov/idtheft and from the Social Security Administration website www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/idtheft.htm

QUESTION: I understand that I don't have liability on my government card, but I'm worried about identity theft of my Social Security Number. What steps are being taken to prevent that?

ANSWER: Bank of America is monitoring open accounts where individuals gave prior consent to a credit check. If unusual activity is reported by the credit bureau, the Bank will notify the individual. Individuals with open accounts who previously declined a credit check will be given the opportunity to grant the Bank permission to receive this type of information on their accounts. Bank of America is monitoring any account of a Bank of America customer for fraudulent activity. Additionally, you should monitor your statements from financial institutions and other billing entities (*e.g.*, utilities) to make sure they are accurate. The attachment you received in your initial letter from the bank provided other useful tips such as shredding any credit card applications, not using easily identifiable information as passwords, and being aware of suspicious emails or phone calls asking for account information that a financial institution should already have.

QUESTION: Is there any new information on the status of the tapes? I read that they were in fact stolen.

ANSWER: There is no additional information on the status of the tapes. They have not been recovered, nor is there any evidence to date that they have been accessed or used by anyone for fraud or criminal activity.